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2020 WAS A BOOSTER SHOT AGAINST HUMAN HUBRIS

(By George Will)

The plague year 2020 was yet another brutal rejoinder to the belief that brute forces can be pushed to the margins of, and eventually out of, humanity's experience. When today's pandemic recedes, what should linger is a quickened appreciation of the fragility of life and social arrangements. And an awareness that things much worse than covid-19 have happened before, and will continue to happen. The human story is not entirely the 1918-19 human choices.

The 1918-19 "Spanish flu," which began in Kansas, killed between 50 million and 100 million people worldwide, lowered U.S. life expectancy by 12 years, and did not spare, as covid-19 largely does, the young. The Black Death—the bubonic plague—of 1346-1353 was much worse, killing 10 percent of the world's population, and more than one-third of Europe's, including 40,000 of London's 70,000 residents.

In the 1980s, AIDS was so shocking because it refuted the complacent belief that infectious disease epidemics had been banished. In 2019, however, 1.7 million people were newly infected with the AIDS virus, and 690,000 people who were already infected died. But of the 38 million living with the virus, 25.4 million were controlling it with antiviral drugs.

Astronomy lowered mankind's self-esteem (we are not the center of the universe), then biology did (our species has an undistinguished pedigree). Geology, too, has disturbed our sense of mastery. Genesis enjoins us to "subdue" the Earth, but this slowly cooling residue of the Big Bang gets a vote. As its continents wander—half an inch to four inches a year, according to plate tectonics—the planet's interior of boiling gas and molten rock occasionally is heard from.

Volcanic eruptions at what is now Yellowstone National Park some 630,000 years ago covered half of what is now the continental United States with ash. When the Indonesian volcano Krakatoa erupted in 1883, sea surges, which killed most of the eruption's eventual 36,000 victims, were felt in the English Channel. Krakatoa, was, however, only one-tenth as powerful as the April 1815 eruption of Indonesia's Mount Tambora, which killed 10,000 instantly—incandescent ash flowed 100 miles per hour—and generated winds that uprooted trees. Particulate matter blocking the sun's rays cooled the Earth: Water froze in some American cisterns on July 4. Today, a large majority of the one-eighth of the nation's population that lives in California resides near the San Andreas fault, and the question is not if but when it will lurch catastrophically.

A U.S. satellite poised between Earth and the sun can provide perhaps a 45-minute warning if the sun is going to plunge the planet into darkness. On Sept. 2, 1859, before there were light bulbs, a coronal mass ejection (CME) of 100 million tons of charged particles thrown off by the sun only produced spectacular sunsets. If—actually, when—it happens again, it can produce chaos in our thoroughly electrified, digitized world by induced electric currents: no functioning satellites, telephonic communications, water pumps, financial transactions, hospitals. No Netflix. That got your attention.

On March 13, 1989, a CME solar storm turned out the lights in the entire Canadian province of Quebec. Three days earlier, a NASA astronomer says, scientists had noticed "a powerful explosion on the sun. Within minutes, tangled magnetic forces on the sun had released a billion-ton cloud of gas. It was like the energy of thousands of nuclear

bombs exploding at the same time. The storm cloud rushed out from the sun, straight towards Earth, at 1 million miles an hour." This geomagnetic storm struck the Earth the evening of March 12, creating "electrical currents in the ground beneath much of North America," crashing Quebec's power grid.

There are those who believe in a benevolent God because Earth, as they see it, is "biophilic," meaning friendly to life. They must, however, reckon not only with non-biophilic things (saber-toothed tigers, volcanoes, typhoons, viruses, etc.), but also with the fact that this (meaning: everything) is not going to end well. The universe will either continue to expand, ending in life-extinguishing cold, or will collapse into incinerating heat.

Meanwhile, here is some (sort of) good news, from the Economist. In history's bloodiest century, the last one, 100 million to 200 million people died as a result of war. Measles killed in the same range, influenza near the top of the range. Smallpox, however, killed 300 million to 500 million.

The eradication of smallpox, by globally coordinated vaccination campaigns, "stands as one of the all-time-great humanitarian triumphs."

Human choices cannot subdue all the brute forces that always lurk. Choices can, however, make a difference. And they can dignify us, a thinking, coping species.

NOMINATION OF ANTONY JOHN BLINKEN

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Madam President, I rise to speak in support of Tony Blinken's nomination to be Secretary of State.

I support Tony for Secretary of State for three key reasons. First, he has the diplomatic skills that our country needs at this pivotal moment to regain our leadership on the world stage. From 2015 to 2017, he served as Deputy Secretary of State, the Nation's second highest ranking diplomat. In that position, he helped lead U.S. efforts to combat terrorism, address rising concerns in Asia, and respond to Russian regional aggression. He is a crisis-tested leader who will hit the ground running at the State Department with critical knowledge and relationships with leaders worldwide.

Second, Tony has a longstanding and trusted personal relationship with President Biden that will enable him to advise the President on key foreign policy issues. During President Obama's first term in office, he was National Security Advisor to then-Vice President Biden. Previously, Tony served as the Democratic staff director for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for 6 years when then-Senator Biden was committee chairman. It is because of his relationship with President Biden and his career as a public servant that Tony understands that the job of Secretary of State is not just to serve the American people, but to help improve the lives of people struggling all over the world.

Last but certainly not least, Tony has the experience of serving at the State Department that will help him rebuild the Department, recruiting needed Foreign Service Officers and ci-

vilians, ensuring State personnel have the training they need to be effective in their mission, restoring morale throughout the Department, and empowering our diplomats to speak on behalf of him and President Biden.

Tony will help our country repair the damage of the last 4 years and restore the United States as a leader and trusted ally. I look forward to working with him to advance our mutual objectives of promoting peace and security, and I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of his confirmation.

Thank you.

CONFIRMATION OF LLOYD JAMES AUSTIN

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam President, I was proud to vote in support of Lloyd Austin to serve as our next Secretary of Defense. I cast my vote with confidence that he will capably lead the Department of Defense through this difficult period in our Nation's history.

As a four-star general, Lloyd Austin was tasked with leading the drawdown of American troops from Iraq and helped bring 150,000 U.S. soldiers home. He demonstrated the logistical mastery that will be necessary to help lead the nationwide effort to vaccinate against COVID-19. Through his remarkable life and trailblazing career, he has gained the experience and perspective required of this office, and now, he has broken one more barrier as the first African-American Secretary of Defense in our Nation's history. I am confident he will ensure that our Armed Forces reflect and respect the diversity of our Nation and that everyone in our military upholds the oath they take to protect our Constitution.

I have made no secret of my concerns about the troubling trend of Congress granting waivers to allow recently retired officers to serve as Secretary of Defense, and I voted against such a waiver for Lloyd Austin as I did when that question was previously put before the Congress. Nevertheless, I believe once Congress speaks on the issue of a waiver, each Senator must evaluate the nominee on his or her merits alone. By that measure, Lloyd Austin is superbly qualified. He has the confidence of the President and is the right person for this moment. I support his confirmation.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING BARBARA HARDCASTLE

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Madman President, I rise today to honor the life of Mrs. Barbara Hardcastle, who passed away on January 13, 2020, at the age of 94.

Mrs. Hardcastle was trailblazer and a fierce advocate for her community and her State. A native of Fort Smith, AK, she also made her mark in politics and government in California. I was honored to know her, and so I join her friends and family in grieving her loss.

Barbara Turner was born in Fort Smith on April 6, 1927. She graduated from Fort Smith High School in 1944 and went on to earn a bachelor's degree from Fort Smith Junior College. She

married Ben Hardcastle, a banker and World War II veteran, in 1947, and they would spend almost 63 years together before his passing in 2010.

Early in their married life, Ben accepted a job at the Beverly Hills Savings and Loan, so they moved to North Hollywood, CA. They immediately became active in their local church and, as a result, made friends with many Hollywood actors, including Ronald and Nancy Reagan.

Their friendship with the Reagans led to Barbara's involvement in California politics, including playing a key role in his race for Governor of California. She is also credited by many as having introduced the future President to Jelly Belly candy as he attempted to stop smoking. Friends and family say she kept him stocked with the company's signature jelly beans throughout his Presidency.

During their time in California, Barbara became an ordained minister and public speaker. She was also a trail-blazing professional, serving as a supervisor and one of the first female executives with the Federal housing agency, Fannie Mae.

Ben and Barbara decided to retire in 1991 and returned to Arkansas, where they continued to be active in local, State and national politics. In addition to helping candidates for all levels of public office, Barbara used her experience to make a difference in the community.

I had many opportunities to work with Barbara over the years, but no occasion stands out more than her determined efforts on behalf of the 188th Fighter Wing when its future was threatened by the Base Realignment and Closure Commission, BRAC. She used her organizing skills to rally the community and show visiting BRAC committee members how strong support was for the base. Her leadership and industry helped save the Wing and bring more opportunity to the region.

Barbara was truly a force. Her strong values, hard work, wonderful sense of humor and personal conviction made a difference. I am grateful to have counted her as a friend and hope her legacy will continue to inspire young Arkansans to fight for their communities and their causes with the same determination that she did throughout her life.●

REMEMBERING GARY SPEARS

● Mr. BOOZMAN. Madam President, I rise today to honor the life of an outstanding Arkansan and Cleveland County leader, Judge Gary Spears. After a multiyear battle with cancer, Judge Spears passed away on January 10, 2021.

Judge Spears grew up on a small farm in New Edinburg, AR, and graduated with honors from New Edinburg High School in 1987. He attended the University of Arkansas at Monticello, where he studied agricultural business before marrying his wife Melody. The couple moved to Warren, AR, where

Judge Spears worked as a distributor for Big R Ice. The couple eventually returned to New Edinburg in 1996 and purchased the New Edinburg County Store, which they operated together for 10 years.

In 2007, Judge Spears was elected Cleveland County Judge, marking the start of an illustrious 14-year career as the longest serving county judge in county history. His undeniable leadership while presiding over Cleveland County had ripple effects that extended beyond the county borders and brought tremendous benefit to the entire State. A few recent and notable achievements during his tenure include successful efforts to ensure an accurate 2020 census count for Cleveland County and directly overseeing the county's finances during the COVID-19 pandemic by authorizing and approving the disbursement of funds.

Representing the citizens of Cleveland County was a clear passion for Judge Spears. He was also dedicated to farming. On the exact 10-acre plot that his father once farmed, Judge Spears worked diligently to continue his family's unique tradition of "truck-patch farming." He grew various crops, including tomatoes, beans, peas, squash, cucumbers, watermelons, peppers, and much more. In fact, his family's agriculture operation gained deserved recognition in 2019 when they were named Cleveland County Farm Family of the Year.

Judge Spears leaves behind a lasting legacy thanks to the confidence entrusted in him by his Cleveland County constituents. I am confident his selfless leadership as a Cleveland County judge, businessman, and family farmer will guide and inspire future generations of Arkansans.●

TRIBUTE TO GARLAND SHEPHEARD

● Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Garland Shephard, who retired as the North Carolina House sergeant-in-arms at the beginning of the year. Mr. Shephard is a proud North Carolinian who was committed to keeping North Carolina legislators safe.

Garland Shephard is a lifelong resident of Tarboro, NC, where he resides with his wife Betty Jo. Mr. Shephard was successful car salesman and additionally served as Edgecombe County Republican Party chairman. He also served two terms on the Tarboro Town Council and has contributed a lifetime of service to his community.

Before representing North Carolina in the U.S. Senate, I had the pleasure of interacting with Mr. Shephard serving as North Carolina speaker of the house. Widely known for his brightly colored jackets and distinct Eastern North Carolina accent, Garland was loved by members from both sides of the aisle.

As the U.S. Senator from North Carolina, I am grateful for Garland's service

to our State and Nation. I hope he enjoys his much-deserved retirement back in Eastern North Carolina, and we will never forget his commitment to keeping North Carolinians safe.●

EXECUTIVE REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON FRIDAY, JANUARY 22, 2021

The following executive report of a nomination was submitted:

By Mr. GRASSLEY for the Committee on Finance.

*Janet Louise Yellen, of California, to be Secretary of the Treasury.

*Nomination was reported with recommendation that it be confirmed subject to the nominee's commitment to respond to requests to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Senate.

MESSAGE FROM THE HOUSE

At 7:12 p.m., a message from the House of Representatives, delivered by Mr. RASKIN (manager on the part of the House in the matter of impeachment of Donald John Trump), announced that the House has agreed to the following resolution:

H. RES. 24

Resolved, That Donald John Trump, President of the United States, is impeached for high crimes and misdemeanors and that the following article of impeachment be exhibited to the United States Senate:

Article of impeachment exhibited by the House of Representatives of the United States of America in the name of itself and of the people of the United States of America, against Donald John Trump, President of the United States of America, in maintenance and support of its impeachment against him for high crimes and misdemeanors.

ARTICLE I: INCITEMENT OF INSURRECTION

The Constitution provides that the House of Representatives "shall have the sole Power of Impeachment" and that the President "shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors". Further, section 3 of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution prohibits any person who has "engaged in insurrection or rebellion against" the United States from "hold[ing] any office . . . under the United States". In his conduct while President of the United States—and in violation of his constitutional oath faithfully to execute the office of President of the United States and, to the best of his ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States, and in violation of his constitutional duty to take care that the laws be faithfully executed—Donald John Trump engaged in high Crimes and Misdemeanors by inciting violence against the Government of the United States, in that:

On January 6, 2021, pursuant to the 12th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, the House of Representatives, and the Senate met at the United States Capitol for a Joint Session of Congress to count the votes of the Electoral College. In the months preceding the Joint Session, President Trump repeatedly issued false statements asserting that the Presidential election results were the product of widespread fraud and should not be accepted by